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Ogarkov tells how Soviets can win war in Europe

By Yossef Bodansky
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Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov is the Soviet Union's most important man in uniform.

He has formulated and implemented a new, comprehensive "grand strategy" for the Soviet Union holding that not only are nuclear wars winnable by the side that strikes first and without warning, but that, through a massive lightning strike by modern conventional forces,

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Soviet forces could achieve victory over NATO without a single nuclear weapon being fired.

This Ogarkov "grand strategy" will dominate Soviet defense policy until the next century.

By the mid-1970s, the Soviet military had achieved the capability of mounting sudden, strategic deep offensives without resorting to the use of nuclear weapons. Based on his high-level experience with U.S. attitudes in the SALT I negotiations, Marshal Ogarkov realized that American political and military leaders would agonize over, and perhaps even forgo, making a decision to escalate unilaterally to the use of nuclear weapons in the event the Soviets launched a non-nuclear invasion in Europe.

Marshal Ogarkov argued that, if the Soviets would capitalize on the emotional biases of the United States, they could complete the occupation of Western Europe

in the non-nuclear initial period of war before Washington could decide whether to resort to nuclear weapons to stop the Soviet advance.

In other words, the deeper into Western territory the Soviets could penetrate in the initial non-nuclear stage of the war, the less likely the Americans would be to use nuclear weapons to stop them.

Furthermore, reasoned Marshal Ogarkov, if the Soviets, having in the first instance a clear nuclear superiority, threatened to escalate the conflict into an all-out nuclear attack on

the North American continent, they would further complicate and prolong Washington's agonizing over whether to use nuclear weapons.

This would buy more time for the Soviet armed forces in which to complete their non-nuclear occupation of Europe.

The man who has sculpted those forces is a professional soldier, utterly loyal to Russia and the Soviet system, and in return enjoys the total trust of the "nomenklatura," the high-ranking, privileged bureaucrats.

Earlier this month, Marshal Ogarkov's de facto supreme military position was recognized publicly — when the Kremlin reappointed him first deputy minister of defense and commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact forces.

Nikolai Vasilyevich Ogarkov was born on Oct. 30, 1917, in the Kalininskaya Oblast in central Russia. He finished vocational high school in 1937 and joined the army the following year. In 1941 he graduated from the Kuybyshev Military Engineering Academy and was posted to the Karelian front against Finland where, as a senior fortifications engineer, he used slave and forced labor supplied by Yuri Andropov.

This was the start of a 42-year relationship with a man who later rose to the highest ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), serving as a Central Committee secretary in the 1960s, then KGB chief and finally, as CPSU general secretary, becoming the nation's top leader.

During the war, Mr. Ogarkov accumulated diversified combat and command experience in staff and engineering posts in the Kola peninsula against Finnish-German forces.

After the war, he opted for a military career, returning for advanced courses at the Kuybyshev academy. Until 1957, he served in senior command and staff positions in the Far Eastern military district. In 1959, he graduated from the Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff, a key event in the career of a future senior commander of the Soviet Armed Forces.

In December 1961, Mr. Ogarkov was promoted from commander of a motorized rifle division in East Germany to chief of staff and deputy commander of the important Belorussian Military District and, in mid-1963, to first deputy com-

mander of that district. These posts gave him valuable experience in command and control of combined-arms formations.

After Mr. Ogarkov was made commander of the very important Volga Military District in December 1965 — which contains the supreme command post at Zhiguli near Kuybyshev (a city forbidden to foreigners) on the Volga River, which would be the supreme headquarters in the event of nuclear war — he resumed his close cooperation with Mr. Andropov, who had become the KGB chief.

The Zhiguli command post was entirely rebuilt under Mr. Ogarkov's overall supervision — a post for which his engineering background made him particularly qualified. In

recognition of the excellence of his work, and with the rank of colonel general, he was made a candidate member of the Central Committee.

Gen. Ogarkov's brilliance in trickery and deception operations was displayed at this time, when he began preparations for military exercises intended to restore the land battlefield as the prime form of warfare. Some of the initial tests of new weapons and tactics and the development of the airborne forces for the exercise were conducted in Volga Military District in strict secrecy. Gen. Ogarkov devised for these exercises a major deception or "maskirovka" project that would on the one hand intimidate Western observers by demonstrating the might and sophistication of the Soviet military and, on the other hand, persuade NATO observers that it was futile to consider the Rhine as a defensive line.

Gen. Ogarkov had a special floating bridge built and invented a totally bogus "First Guards Bridge-Laying Division" to lay it. An empty train and truck caravan were raced across. Until the defection of a Soviet officer 10 years later, the West was convinced that the bridge was genuine.

Gen. Ogarkov's outstanding performance brought him to the Politburo's attention. In April 1968 he was promoted, ahead of schedule, to general of the army and was named first deputy to the chief of the general staff. His main assignment was reactivation of the Chief Directorate of Strategic Maskirovka — the GUSM, or 13th Directorate in charge of "strategic deception."

The Russian term "maskirova" includes camouflage, concealment

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and deception, and it does well to consider the expertise, flair and talent for maskirovka of the Soviet Union's commander-in-chief against NATO.

As chief of strategic deception, Gen. Ogarkov expanded his close work with the KGB, and he and Mr. Andropov personally were involved in some of the most daring deceptions and disinformation operations against the West. Many of these took place during the 1969-71 SALT I negotiations where Gen. Ogarkov, while head of strategic deception, was the top Soviet military delegate. One would have thought that this might have told the American SALT negotiators something about Soviet intentions.

Defectors from Soviet military intelligence, the GRU and the KGB credit Gen. Ogarkov personally with the clever maneuver by which he succeeded in drawing the United States into self-exposure of its intelligence capabilities by establishing the precedent that all future negotiations would be based solely on data provided by the American side.

In recognition of his contribution to SALT I, Gen. Ogarkov was elevated to full membership in the Central Committee. In March 1974, he was appointed deputy minister of defense. In January 1977, he was promoted to marshal of the Soviet Union and appointed chief of the general staff and first deputy minister of defense. He was also made Hero of the Soviet Union.

All of his promotions and honors came earlier than would have been expected and were unprecedented.

Marshal Ogarkov worked tirelessly for the modernization and professionalization of the Soviet military forces. His engineering and command experience puts him in the unique position of being able to comprehend the latest scientific-technical developments and to follow the development of military doctrine, science and the art of war.

Furthermore, Marshal Ogarkov entered the general staff determined to make a major impact. His first task was to complete formulation of a unified "grand strategy" for

the Soviet Union. He established a small group of senior general staff officers and theoreticians from the main military academies to function as his think-tank, studying the challenges of warfare in the future.

He himself is a prolific writer on military theory and strategy. His many articles and monographs, dangerously neglected by Western military strategists, provide a clear picture of his sophisticated strategic thinking and the depth of his military knowledge.

Marshal Ogarkov was responsible for the Zapad-81 military exercise, in which the Soviet military forces confirmed their ability to conduct a non-nuclear, strategic deep offensive. In this exercise, Soviet forces were able to move in just a few days across distances exceeding the distance between Minsk and Paris.

Subsequently, the Soviets have committed themselves to winning total victory in the non-nuclear initial period of war as their preferred form of warfare if they go to war in Europe. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Soviets have profoundly reorganized their entire armed forces. The senior combat commanders have been entrusted with unprecedented battlefield authority, and they are assigned diversified weapons ranging from air force through chemical troops to tank armies.

The Soviet Air Force, the fleet and other forces were reorganized and stripped of power in order to facilitate Marshal Ogarkov's new combat command structure.

Marshal Ogarkov envisages a battle fought in the future as a series of swift and massive engagements in which huge combined-arms superunits advance rapidly, despite mounting casualties caused by a massive use of guided munitions by the West.

Marshal Ogarkov believes most emphatically that the Soviet scientific-technological effort should be dedicated principally to integrating high technology into weapons and fighting capabilities. Every new industrial facility and most agricultural systems are built as military systems temporarily employed for non-military uses — putting a further strain on Eastern economies.



AP

Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov

Last month, Marshal Ogarkov went still further in his advocacy of forestalling the ability of the enemy to strike the Soviet Union. It should be a chilling, but not daunting, thought that the leading Soviet general, the master of strategic deception, camouflage and concealment, is a believer in pre-emptive first strikes. U.S. strategic planners and arms control negotiators should be concerned that Marshal Ogarkov has been allowed to remold Soviet forces to carry out a pre-emptive first strike and that he now has been confirmed as commander over those very forces.

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